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Selective Sympathy: The Public and Private Mary Merrick Brooks: [1]

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One of Concord's leading abolitionists during the mid-nineteenth century was Mary Merrick Brooks (1801-1868), wife of prominent lawyer Nathan Brooks and mother of their son George, a man whose distinguished career would encompass the law, the House of Representatives, and a judicial appointment. Throughout her life, Mary Brooks strove to raise the consciousness of her townspeople regarding the abomination of slavery. She served on the executive and nominating committees of the Middlesex County Anti-Slavery Society and as President of the Concord Female Anti-Slavery Society, and from the early 1830s on, Brooks became the driving force behind the town's antislavery movement—"Concord's most indefatigable abolitionist" according to Len Gougeon.[2] Her home was a hub for abolitionist visitors and fugitive slaves alike, she spearheaded the town's antislavery fundraising efforts, and she corresponded frequently with New England's leading abolitionists—Wendell Phillips, William Lloyd Garrison, Maria Weston Chapman, and others—nearly demanding that these popular activists appear in Concord more often to publicize and agitate for the antislavery effort.

The Concord Female Anti-Slavery Society was founded in 1837, and its mission was enhanced by the visit that September of noted abolitionist speakers Angelina and Sarah Grimke. The Grimkes stayed with the Brooks family and were entertained by Lidian Emerson; and according to Prudence Ward, an abolitionist who boarded with the Thoreau family, their visit "awakened a greater interest in the subject than any previous lecturer."[3] Ward's correspondence regularly mentions other abolitionists who stopped in Concord, and Ward usually notes that the guests stayed with the Brooks or Emerson families. Brooks lost no time capitalizing on the zeal arising from the Grimkes' appearance, and the Concord Female Anti-Slavery Society soon counted the community's most prominent women among its members: Lidian Emerson, Abigail May Alcott, and seven of the women residing in the Thoreau household: Cynthia, Sophia, and Helen Thoreau; Thoreau's aunts Maria and Jane; and Prudence Ward and her mother. In this small town where abolitionism was still enormously unpopular, the antislavery women gravitated toward one another, merging serious reform work with existing friendships. Like their peers in the Boston Female Anti-Slavery Society, the Concord women held fairs and other events to solicit interest in and raise money for the cause, and, by 1839, the Concord Female Anti-Slavery Society earned the distinction of being the branch association to most enrich the coffers of the Boston abolitionists.[4]

Brooks was a demanding woman who enjoyed a fairly close friendship with both the Thoreau and Emerson families, and she regularly discussed antislavery matters with them. When a fugitive slave needed assistance, it was often Brooks who galvanized the men in town to action. On the night in February 1851 that escaped fugitive Shadrach Minkins was hidden in Concord enroute to Canada, both Brooks and her husband Nathan joined Ann and Francis Bigelow in rendering aid to Minkins and assisting with his extraordinary getaway.[5] Upon her death, Wendell Phillips eulogized Brooks by underscoring

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Mary Merrick Brooks, *from page 1*

her influence on the men of Concord:

"The famous men who lived there turned then only a tolerant eye on the cause, standing themselves at a civil distance. In kindly deference to wife or friend, they showed their faces, now and then, at antislavery meetings. Still it is but justice to say that it was the 'continual coming' of those untiring women that 'won or wearied' the noted names of Concord into sympathy with this great uprising for justice. We call others self-sacrificing and devoted; but she and her associates *lived* for their reform ideas."[6]

No Concord voice was more prized than that of Ralph Waldo Emerson, and Brooks seemed to regard it as her personal duty to convert Emerson to a more public abolitionist stance, no doubt believing as did many others, including his wife, that his stature would lend considerable weight to the cause.[7] Lidian Emerson had long sought to influence her husband on issues of reform, particularly in the case of the Cherokee Indians,[8] and her own attempts no doubt benefited from Brooks's additional tactics with Emerson. In the spring of 1838, Brooks wrote a letter on behalf of the Female Anti-Slavery Society to Representative John Quincy Adams regarding the treatment of the Cherokees, and Ward credits Brooks with being "the principal in all that's been done" in Concord on this issue.[9] Thanks at least in part to Lidian's sentiments and Brooks's needling, Emerson did write to President Van Buren protesting the removal of the Cherokees to Oklahoma, and, again in response to Brooks's influence, Emerson spoke out publicly against slavery in the 1844 address celebrating the anniversary of West Indian emancipation.[10] In addition, Brooks played a key role in Emerson's decision in 1845 not to lecture in New Bedford when the Lyceum there decided to deny blacks permission to join.[11]

Manuscript letters in the Concord Free Public Library, however, divulge another and less flattering dimension of Mary Brooks. In contrast to the sympathy she freely offered the slave, she could be a cold and heartless mother, an image that calls into question the standard view of the maternal female reformer who enfolds one and all in her sympathetic bosom. In 1833, Brooks's stepdaughter Caroline, a child from Nathan Brooks's first marriage to Caroline Downes, wrote to Mary Brooks, declaring her devotion and denying Brooks's accusation that Caroline could not love her stepmother as her own mother. A decade later, three heartfelt letters sent to his mother by 20 year-old George Brooks, then finishing his senior year at Harvard, document Mary Brooks's callousness in the face of her son's plea for maternal absolution. In early March 1844, George wrote to his mother to repent for a lively evening with friends that had obviously included the consumption of alcohol—an incident that also involved Edward Hoar (who a month later would endure further scorn from his neighbors for accidentally setting Fair Haven woods afire with friend Henry Thoreau). But Brooks, whose reform advocacy included the temperance movement, did not bestow the charity her son sought. George writes: "I concluded also that you, philanthropic & lenient to all, would be the same to your own Son, but how were all such fallacious hopes blasted in a moment by receiving your letter this morning."[12]

That young George Brooks was a boisterous college student is corroborated by J. S. Keyes who writes "he was . . . a little inclined to play rather than study, and neither a great reader nor a forward scholar," and "in college he was more distinguished for good-fellowship and charming kindness of manner than for scholarship."[13] Yet the incident that spawned Mary Brooks's harsh letters to her son caused George an enormous sense of guilt, as the transcripts below confirm. According to his letters, his mother wished him dead ("you said that you wished you had strangled me in my cradle") rather than that she should endure the shame brought on by his conduct. George appeals to reason in his letters to his mother as he explains the details of the incident, exonerates his friends, and indicts the do-gooder whom he suspects of telling Mary Brooks about the affair, a "Miss Kimball," possibly Deborah Kimball, a fellow antislavery sympathizer, whose name appears on the list of Concord subscribers to *The Liberator*.

These letters from her children reveal that while Mary Brooks was driven to publicize and aid the plight of the slave, she was apparently a manipulative and an emotionally distant parent—a mother who in fact seemed more concerned about the effect of local gossip on her own standing in the community than about the blot of this misconduct on George's permanent record. Given her high profile among the leaders of various reform organizations, Mary Brooks no doubt cared deeply about her reputation. In all fairness, we cannot judge her reaction to this episode completely on the basis of George Brooks's side of the correspondence, but his letters verify that his mother felt free at this time to impose strict censure upon her son despite his relative maturity—only six months later he would be studying law at his father's firm in Concord before going on to law school at Harvard. Moreover, we have no reason to doubt George's accuracy when he quotes from his mother's letters; clearly, his entreaties for pardon made no impact on her resolve. These emotional letters of Caroline and George Brooks to their mother reveal that when it came to her son's intemperance or her stepdaughter's latent feelings for her real mother, Mary Brooks the advocate for the slave could also be Mary Brooks the unyielding, even vindictive mother. Charity, in her case, apparently did not begin at home.

(I would like to thank the Concord Free Public Library for permission to quote from the manuscript letters of George and Caroline Brooks, and to thank both the Huntington Library and the Abernethy Library of Middlebury College for permission to quote from the manuscript letters of Prudence Ward.)

The following letters are reprinted by permission of the Concord Free Public Library, Special Collections Department.

Excerpt from ALS [autograph letter signed], Caroline Brooks to Mary Merrick Brooks, 1 September 1833:

> "PS. My Dear Mother, I have always noticed when any thing happens with me and George or the girls, that you think that I do not care any thing about you, because I have been told that you are not my own mother, but it is very different. I have never known any other mother, therefore I know no difference. There has been very little told me about her, therefore why should

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Mary Merrick Brooks, *from page 2*

I have such a detestation of you, because you are not my mother, when I knew no other. I certainly do not think my Dear Mother that I *spite* you, as you say, think of it how horrid. I am sure that your daughter shall not be guilty of such injustice. Forgive me past injuries and be assured you shall ever after have a [sic] affectionate and dutiful daughter, in your own Caroline."

ALS, George Brooks to Mary Merrick Brooks (written while George was completing his last year at Harvard University), 1 March 1844:

"Dear Mother,

No longer than last night I was congratulating myself with the thought that by this time, the most unfortunate occurrence in my life was almost wholly blown over in the town of Concord.

I sat down last night & coolly & calmly reflected upon the whole matter. I saw & felt the iniquity of the proceeding, & thinking thus, my thoughts naturally reverted to my parents. I knew the anguish that such a transgression must necessarily cause them, & while on that subject, the greif [sic] of my mind can better be conceived of, than expressed. But while suffering under such reflections, one thought consoled me, ie My parents love me (at least I have no reason to suppose the contrary) & if they love me they will forgive transgressions even of a blacker die than the one I have been guilty of if they sincerely believed that I had repented. I have given them my word that my penitence was sincere, have signed the temperance pledge, & intend that my future actions shall not belie my professions. Thinking thus the melancholy which has ever pursued me while thinking of the affair, began to abate. I concluded also that you, philanthropic & lenient to all, would be the same to your own Son, but how were all such fallacious hopes blasted in a moment by receiving your letter this morning I almost agreed with you, when you said that you wished you had strangled me in my cradle, or rather that some kind fortune had taken me away in my infancy, rather than have reserved me to be such a trial to my mother.

To me your feelings are perfectly inexplicable: when you say that you should hail with joy & delight the news that should say to you 'your son is a lifeless corpse' I really cannot fathom them, why you should wish a person to leave this world merely because he has committed a sin I cannot tell, you would not say the same of a common murderer. & yet you write it to me. What can I do to appease your grief? I have done all I can. I have promised. I shall perform my promises. O that the power was given me to express my most inmost thoughts & to transfer them to paper, if I could you would not think thus harshly of me, or if the power was given you to examine my thoughts you would look upon the matter in totally a different light. After perusing your letter it was impossible for me to give my attention to my studies & I hastened from recitation to answer it. When I read your letter I was in some doubt whether it would not be be [sic] best for to leave this land embark in some ship bound for a distant land & never again return, thinking that if the cause of your grief was removed, you would soon return to your former self, but I banished the idea, knowing that when you calmly reflected upon the subject you would see that it was acting the part of a christian to forgive rather than to be carried away by your feelings. And now Mother I beg I entreat you not to grieve so much on my account. I will own that I have committed a sin instead of an indiscretion, & moreover I will swear that I never in my life will be guilty of another of a similar nature. Give my love to Father, I feel sure that he will be lenient to me for this transgression. Never an event in my life ever caused me so much pain as this, & I trust there will never be another.

from your affect Son George"

ALS, George to Mary Brooks, Sunday March 1844:

"Dear Mother

I sit down this evening to answer your letter of last week, & I hardly know what to say.

I had hoped that by this time your mind would have been relieved partially, if not wholly of the load put upon it by my actions in the vacation, but the thought of my deviation from the path of rectitude, seems to be so indelibly impressed upon it, that all my promises of future good behavior have no effect upon you. You said that you prayed to God that I might die now, rather than live a life of sin. You cannot pray for that more earnestly than I do myself, & although I do not feel myself prepared for that event, yet I dread it not so much now, as I should have a few years ago, for my prospects of success in life are not so brilliant but that I could easily give them up. I have lately been thinking, what should be my course in this life, that is, what I should do for a living, & when I look around me & see how many there are who are superior to me in talents, & those who are my equals, possessing other attributes that I lack, by which they can get along respectably in life, I cannot help feeling discouraged at my future prospects, & this in addition to your grief on account of my derelictions, & sundry other vexations, have at times made me rather melancholy of late, but then I know tis useless to murmur at anything appointed by fate, so I let such thoughts trouble me as little as possible, but they will sometimes rise in my mind. You said that probably I placed as little faith in the efficacy in prayer as I did in dreams. I know not what should have given you that opinion of me, for on the contrary I place great faith in prayer & know many instances when prayers have been answered. But then I beleive [sic] as the minister said to day (who delivered a very affecting discourse upon the death of

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President's Column

Elizabeth Witherell

In "Natural History of Massachusetts," Henry Thoreau's first substantial published piece, he celebrates books of natural history as "the most cheerful winter reading." The descriptions he finds in them evoke other seasons that he can remember or anticipate, and through these descriptions he experiences the details of nature in other places. He finds himself refreshed, made to feel full of health, by Audubon's account "of the magnolia, and the Florida keys, and their warm sea-breezes; of the fence- rail, and the cotton-tree, and the migrations of the rice-bird" and even by the names, "service-berries, poke-weed, juniper . . . Labrador and East Main."

I was reminded of Thoreau's delight in the vicarious travel provided by books when I was working with the manuscript volumes of the Journal in the Morgan Library last winter. He wrote his entries for July 9 through November 9, 1858, in a notebook (MA 1302:33) into which is tucked several sheets containing a long list, in Thoreau's hand, of local place-names. There in New York, as here in Santa Barbara, these names evoke Thoreau's experiences in the woods and fields around Concord with surprising intensity. His habit of incorporating the characteristic features of a place into his name for it brings the landscape to life.

As far as I know this list has never been published, although the names will be familiar. Some of them can be found in the indexes to the 1906 edition and to the first five volumes of the Journal published in *The Writings of Henry D. Thoreau*; a number of the places can be located on maps in Robert Stowell's *A Thoreau Gazetteer*, edited by William L. Howarth (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1970).

Here, with the permission of the Morgan Library, is a transcript of the list. Thoreau wrote it in pencil in columns; for the sake of space, we've presented it here in paragraphs—one paragraph for each page of the list. Each line in the list is followed by a comma here. When Thoreau crossed out a word, I've followed that word with a bracketed note saying so; I've closed the parentheses that Thoreau left open; I've supplied words for which he used ditto marks; and I've enclosed words that are partially indecipherable within square brackets.

Thoreau did not give the list a title or comment on its use. Perhaps the order of places will make sense to a member of the Society who knows the area; if so, I hope he or she will respond to the *Bulletin's* editor, Mike Berger, with something that might be printed.

Potamogeton ["Potamogeton" crossed out] Weedy Pond, Swimming-ford, Ephemeris Reach, Red Pine Hill, Oak-pasture (or [Whitethroat] pasture), Chestnut Oak Shore, Beech Hollow, Black Bird Bank, The Alders (in Manatuket), Alder shore (at Hubswood?), Bayberry Pasture--, Sweetgale meadow--(?) [where], The Buttonwoods or Barberry field (?), Poplar path toward 2d Division, Willow Bay (below Dome Rock), Willow Bay ["Bay" crossed out] or Island, Willow Swamp ["Willow Swamp" crossed out] (Assabet) Pinxter Swamp, Mulberry path (Old Sudbury road, Celtis wall, Botrichium or [Benzoin] Swamp, Black ash or Bass swamp, Linnaea Woods, Lentago Wall, Cassandra Ponds, Clethra shore (to Flint's), Epigaea Road, Rhodora Swamp (Tarbel's)

Dangleberry Swamp (Hillards), Red Huckle berry pasture, Cornel shore (to Great Meadows op Peters i?), Hard Hack meadow--(by Stone bridge), Thimbleberry wall (Hubbard's), Eglantine wall (on Hill), Sassafras Orchard (on Hill), Pear tree meadow (near Bedford Road), Shadbush meadow, Red Chokeberry swamp, Plum wall, Choke-cherry fence, Grape Cliff (op Bittern Cliff), Rock maple wood--, Paint-turtle meadow (toward Balls Hill), Hyla pool (By Hardens), (Stone heap pond), Musquash-town (shore of Hub mead), Circudella or Sand bank (Potters), Vanessa Ledge--, Bee tree wood, Dragon ["Dragon" crossed out]Devils-needle (coast), Glow-worm bank, Caddis worm ["worm"crossed out] brook, Indian Rock

Emerson's Wood & Cliff, Waban Cliff (Lees), Money digger's Hill, Tupelo Corner, Ind. Ditch Wood--, Casey's Path-, Piet's Corner--, Pout's Nest, Stump fence field--(pasture), Inspiring Inspiration Road--, Conantum Arboretum (Miles'), Ammania shore, The meander--(above wren Hill), White bobolink crossing, Celtis shore, Pestle spring, Goodwin Bay, Nolan's Seat, The Seine-Place, The Weirs (where?), Skating Meadow (Below Reynold's), Sunset reach (Behind Dodds), Ice Hummocks (Bedford), The Hog-Pens (above eastabrooks), Melvins shore (Assabet--below Dodges Brook), Murmuring Brook (Dakins'), Otter Bank ([ ] turtle bank), Jenny's Spring--, Eddy-Bridge, Arrowheads Fields

Buckley's Hill--(or Pilgrim Hill) (Johnson called it "Sunny Bank"), The Brick Kilns' (beyond Monroes), The Common's (by Holder's?), Flag staff Hill (behind C. Davis'), Lost Indian (Wood), Drift-Cut--, The Lime Kiln--, Limestone Quarry (Lincoln), (Easterbrook's Quarry's), Nut Meadow--, Marten spring--(by Farmers) (or intermittent spring), Old-Bridge Meadow (or hardhack Meadow), Locust Burying Ground--, Hill (Bury grnd), New Bury grnd, Sleepy Hollow, Bacon's Mill (or Shawsheen), The Russell Farm (Lincoln), Cold Brook (same as Pole Br--), Mud turtle meadow, Hibiscus meadow (Below Flint's), Rice's swimming place, Teal Rocks (up assabet), Peetweet rock (at the Poke Logan), Frosty Hollows (Richardson wood lot), Spanish Brook, Therien's path--, Britton's Camp--

Mantatuket-Rock--meadow &c--, The Leaning Hemlocks--, The Hanted House, [Horse] skul Meadow, Hemlock Brook, Grackle Swamp, The Muster Field, Assabet Spring, Barrett's Bridge, Woodis Park, Colburn Hill, Hosmer Interval, The Hollowell Bridge, Sunset Interval, The College, The Burs Road--& Bursville, Turtle Hollow, The Shanties, Sparkling reach, Grindstone oak, Ivy Crossing, Myosotis Brook, Cyanean Meadow, Great Bend--, Pe-Pe Swamp, The Bent oaks--, Trillium Woods--

Far away--, Witherell sea Bay--, Eagle-field (Conantum), Aster Wood, Wax work swamp, Swallow reach--(or The Islands)--(or swift Reach), Loon Bay--, Halcyon Bay--Walden, Grebe Bay--, Redstart Wood--, Veery path (by Flints), myrtle bird shore (down river), Wren meadow, Seringo field (by Gowing's swamp), Flicker orchard, Peet weet shore, Tanageria, Heron rock--, Sheldrake Bay--(F. H. P, Coot-point--, [Wilbacornetts] swamp (the Bedford swamp), Tahattawan (for Lees),

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President's Column, *from page 4*

Lee fields (huckleberry pastures &), College meadow, Waban ["Waban" crossed out] & Jethro (where?), Bukeley & Willard, Buttrick's Hill--, Pilgrim burrows ["burrows" crossed out] or hill, Hornbeam Cape, The Green Sea (Great Meadows)

Andromeda Swamp, Quaking Swamp (Gowings), Hollowell Rock, Jacob's path (where he was whipped), Boze's meadow, Moonlight Glade (by Pear tree), Paul Adam's, Curly Pate, Calla Swamp, Leek Knoll, Zizania Shore, Colt path--, Scouring rush Bank--, Yellow Thistle meadow, Box turtle field, Toad Pool--or Bufonio (Hubbard's Corner), Pine sap path (in Hub woods), Fox path through sedge Hollow, Gentian shore below Assabet Bath, The Beeches, Weird Dell (Ch) my Well-meadow field, Witherell vale N W of Puffer's, Otter bay (behind Dea Farrars), Ripple Lake (little g. Pond)

[Editor's Note: Please write to the editor if you think you see how Thoreau ordered these groups of place names. We'll share any insights members may have in following issues. Thanks.]

Mary Merrick Brooks, *from page 3*

Greenwood of the Junior class from this text) 'It is appointed unto all men once to die,' & he went on to say, that God in his omniscience had determined the length of the life of every one of his children, & that no human could accelerate or retard that event, by any earthly means.

The *lady* of the most tried veracity who told you of the conversation between Henry & Frank Bigelow, was probably Miss Kimball judging from what I have seen of the said personages [sic] she may be a person of tried veracity, I have no doubt of that, but she is one of those whom we meet with often in this world, who are not content with telling truth when asked, but are not easy till they tell all the truth that they pick up in their daily perigrinations [sic] especially it gives them comfort so to do, when they can injure any of their fellow beings by this means, she is one of the Birchard tribe, luckily the world does not contain a vast quantity of such individuals. I should have thought if she had any delicacy she might have keep [sic] the conversation to herself, which she probably obtained by eavesdropping. You may think that I have been unnecessarily severe upon this person, it is not my custom to speak evil against anyone, but I cannot help feeling indignant against the person who would thus afflict my Mother, by recounting to her all the slang & scandal that she might have picked up at the tavern & in the street, such an one cannot have much ladylike feeling in her composition. If I have hit upon the wrong person I am sorry, but she whose name I mentioned above, was the only one, who I though [sic] likely would talk to you about this matter."

Excerpt from ALS, George to Mary Brooks (n.d., but this letter continues to discuss the situation of the previous two letters)

"Wednesday Morn

I never have but a moment to write on Wednesday, therefore I must be brief. I hope that neither you, nor any of the Concord people will try to shift the guilt from my shoulders & put it onto Bigelow's for we were all equally to blame. I do not like to have him bear the brunt of all the scandal, & have all the guilt cast at his door. As to Edward Hoar's having the habit of drinking confirmed upon him, he has it, no more than the man in the moon; to my certain knowledge he has not touched any [page torn], about drinking the brandy at Bedford, if true I [page torn] he was quite sick from riding inside of a Sleigh Stage over a rough road, & I question not but many strong temperance would have done the same under similar circumstances. . . . I hope you will not be offended at the remark I made about that lady, to tell the truth I felt rather misanthropic last Sunday eve, & wrote accordingly. Give my love to Father.

from your affect Son George M Brooks"

[1] I would like to thank Professor Phyllis Cole for her comments on an earlier version of this article.

[2] Len Gougeon, "The Anti-Slavery Background of Emerson's 'Ode Inscribed to W. H. Channing,'" in *Studies in the American Renaissance* 1985, ed. Joel Myerson (Charlottesville: UP of Virginia, 1985), 65.

[3] Prudence Ward to Caroline Sewall, 25 September 1837, Sewall-Davenport Collection, The Huntington Library, Huntington, California.

[4] Walter Harding, *The Days of Henry Thoreau* (1962; Princeton: Princeton UP, 1992), 74.

[5] Gary Collison, *Shadrach Minkins: From Fugitive Slave to Citizen* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1997), 153-55.

[6] Quoted in William S. Robinson, *"Warrington" Pen-Portraits: A Collection of Personal and Political Reminiscences from 1848 to 1876, from the Writings of William S. Robinson. With Memoir, and Extracts from Diary and Letters Never before Published* (Boston: Mrs. W. B. Robinson, 1877), 74.

[7] Gougeon, "The Anti-Slavery Background," 66.

[8] Delores Bird Carpenter, ed., *The Selected Letters of Lidian Jackson Emerson* (Columbia: U of Missouri P, 1987), 74.

[9] Prudence Ward to Dennis Ward, 2 May 1838, Special Collections, Abernethy Library, Middlebury College, Middlebury, Vermont.

[10] F. B. Sanborn, "A Concord Note-Book. The Women of Concord—IV. Mrs. Mary Merrick Brooks and the Anti-Slavery Movement," *The Critic* (May 1906): 410; Joan Trumbull, "Concord and the Negro" (master's thesis, Vassar College, 1944), 34.

[11] Len Gougeon, "Emerson and the new Bedford Affair," in *Studies in the American Renaissance* 1981, ed. Joel Myerson (Charlottesville: UP of Virginia, 1981), 258-61.

[12] George Brooks to Mary Merrick Brooks, 1 March 1844, Nathan Brooks Family Papers, Concord Free Public Library, Concord, MA.

[13] J. S. Keyes, "George Merrick Brooks," in *Memoirs of the Members of the Social Circle of Concord: 3rd Series from 1840 to 1895* (Cambridge: Riverside Press, 1907), 220, 221.

A Report on the Symposium on "Thoreau's Natural Philosophy" at Boston University, October 8, 1998

Ed Engelmann

A meeting on "Thoreau's Natural Philosophy" was held at Boston University on October 8, 1998, as a symposium in the ongoing interdisciplinary Boston Colloquium for Philosophy of Science. The meetings are open to all, and a sizable group of students, professors, and other interested scholars were present, including several members of the Thoreau Society. The morning presentations were given by Laura Dassow Walls of Lafayette College and Alfred I. Taubner of Boston University. Ms. Walls is the author of *Seeing New Worlds: Henry David Thoreau and Nineteenth-Century Natural Science.* The afternoon presentations were given by Leo Marx of MIT, who is author of *The Machine in the Garden*, and Lawrence Buell of Harvard, author of *The Environmental Imagination.* Another presentation was scheduled to be given in the afternoon session by Daniel Peck of Vassar College, author of *Thoreau's Morning Work*, on "Thoreau's Landscape: Two Visions of Nature," which unfortunately he was unable to deliver.

The presentation by Ms. Walls was entitled "A Material Faith: Thoreau and the Science of Life." It emphasized Thoreau's concentration on the integrity of natural facts themselves, as opposed to what she sees as Emerson's notion of facts as only being symbols of a higher reality. This emphasis on facts themselves is connected to Thoreau's notion of "the wild," of a nature not in relation to us, but rather of a nature that often resists us, that is not always kind to us. However, she also emphasizes that for Thoreau (as for Emerson), facts are active constructions of thought; there can be no purely "objective fact." The act of knowing is a *creative act.* This is Thoreau's "material faith"—that the sterile opposition between the "physical" and "spiritual" can be overcome in an erotic union between fact and truth.

Ms. Walls notes that Thoreau was not simply a "naturalist" as opposed to our modern conception of the "scientist"; in Thoreau's time, there did not exist an opposition between natural history and "hard science." Thoreau's naturalism was indeed more in line with the notion of nature as historical process as found in his contemporaries Charles Darwin and Asa Grey. This contrasts with the naturalism of Grey's colleague at Harvard, Louis Agassiz, who was anti-developmental because such development in nature implied that species are not representative of eternal divine archetypes. Moreover, Thoreau was much influenced by the writings of Friedrich Alexander Humboldt, who advanced one of the first ecological visions of the universe as a great whole.

Mr. Tauber in his presentation, entitled "Thoreau's Notion of Time: an Ontology, a Metaphysic, an Ethic," took a somewhat different approach than Ms. Walls. He emphasizes the natural world as the context of ethical development and mystical experience. These latter two, he indicates, are each related to distinct notions of *eternity*, notions which are, however, interrelated. The concept of eternity belonging to ethical development is that of eternity as the eternal "now." Unlike the artificial time of Thoreau's and our own contemporaries, Tauber emphasizes the Thoreauvian ethical directive to *live* in the *present*, rather than in the past or the future. This of course does not exclude a normal and necessary remembering of the past and anticipation of the future. To not live in the present is precisely to *waste time*, and so do injury to eternity in the mystical or spiritual sense. This spiritual or metaphysical eternity is the eternity characterizing mystical states such as Thoreau experienced: an eternity not as the eternal present, but as standing altogether "outside of time" or even "before time."

Mr. Tauber also brought in a third concept of time (the "ontological"), one that seems to relate most closely with Ms. Walls's presentation. This is time as the eternal cycle of nature. Tauber emphasizes that we are not merely observers, but rather actors in this eternal cycle, for there is a real development or evolution involving union of intellect and nature. As Thoreau puts it, "Can I not by expectation affect the revolutions of nature—make a day to bring forth something new?" (Journal, April 18,1852).

The afternoon session featured a kind of debate between two different concepts of how Thoreau understood himself and humanity at large in relation to the natural world. The first presentation, by Mr. Marx, featured "The Anthropocentrist's Thoreau." This is Thoreau as a *pastoral* writer, doing a kind of writing which Marx defines as being not only about nature itself, but also about how human life is related to nature. The pastoral qualities of nature heighten Thoreau's political anti-industrial and anti-capitalist message, as found in *Walden.* Marx tends to denigrate the later Thoreau of *The Dispersion of Seeds*, as being tedious and obsessed with detail. Moreover, those who read *Walden* from the perspective of his later writings minimalize the pastoral aspects of *Walden* and thus "cut the political heart" out of it.

Mr. Buell, on the other hand, favors "The Ecocentrist's Thoreau." This is the Thoreau as founder of deep ecology, a Thoreau who focuses on the environmental embodiments of human existence rather than on pastoralist constructions of the natural world. In line with this approach, Buell holds the later, purely scientific writings of Thoreau in much greater esteem than does Marx, because they focus on nature itself rather than merely on human reactions to nature. Afterward, Marx argued that there is an irreducible element of anthropocentricity in all discourse on nature. Buell said that he tends to agree with this, and suggests that rather than there being sharp division, we should think of the pastoralist's and ecocentrist's understandings of Thoreau as lying on a continuum.

In general, this symposium on Thoreau's Natural Philosophy was very informative and stimulating. It is gratifying to see how Thoreau is more and more taken seriously as a natural philosopher within the philosophy of science and literary communities, as evidenced by the excellence of the presentations and the enthusiasm of the audience.

[Editor's Note: Other recent evidence of Thoreau's being taken more seriously these days as a natural philosopher was Professor of Philosophy Max Oelschlaeger's outline of an argument, in his keynote address at the 1998 Annual Gathering in Concord, that Thoreau's writings speak to the concerns of twentieth (and twenty-first) century philosophy.]

"Elementary My Dear Channing!": Sherlock Holmes and Henry David Thoreau[1]

Robert J. Galvin

Assiduous detective work reveals that Sherlock Holmes was acquainted with Thoreau's writings. In *The Adventures of the Noble Bachelor*,[2] Watson recalls the following conversation:

[Holmes to his client Lord St. Simon] "'Quite so. Then I do not think I need to detain you longer. I shall communicate with you.'

'Should you be fortunate enough to solve this problem,' said our client, rising.

'I have solved it.'

'Eh? What was that?'

'I say that I have solved it.'

'Where, then, is my wife?'

'That is a detail which I shall speedily supply.'

Lord St. Simon shook his head. 'I am afraid that it will take wiser heads than yours or mine,' he remarked, and bowing in a stately, old-fashioned manner, he departed.

'It is very good of Lord St. Simon to honor my head by putting it on a level with his own,' said Sherlock Holmes, laughing. 'I think that I shall have a whiskey-and-soda and a cigar after all this cross-questioning. I had formed my conclusions as to the case before our client came into the room.'

'My dear Holmes!'

'I have notes of several similar cases, though none, as I remarked before, which were quite as prompt. My whole examination served to turn my conjecture into a certainty. Circumstantial evidence is occasionally very convincing, as when you find a trout in the milk, to quote Thoreau's example.'" [3]

The circumstantial evidence was the key to the mystery, which, I need hardly add, Holmes quickly solved.

How did the great detective become acquainted with Thoreau's works?

In 1953, in an article entitled "Sherlock Holmes: Rare-Book Collector, A Study in Book Detection," [4] Madeline B. Stern wrote: "In that fruitful year of 1887, but during his work on *The Adventures of the Noble Bachelor*, Holmes took occasion to cite Thoreau's remark on circumstantial evidence, which is very strong, 'as when you find trout in the milk'—a clear enough sign that he may have owned a copy of Thoreau's *Miscellanies* (Boston, 1863), to which Emerson had added a biographical sketch including sentences from the unpublished writings. [5] Among the sentences was, of course, the remark on circumstantial evidence, actually taken from the as yet unpublished Journals of Thoreau."[6]

Emerson's biographical sketch, to which Stern refers, was first published in the *Atlantic Monthly* for August 1862. In the sketch, Emerson says: "I subjoin a few sentences taken from his unpublished manuscripts, not only as records of his thought and feeling, but for their power of description and literary excellence. 'Some circumstantial evidence is very strong, as when you find a trout in the milk.'"[7] In 1862, the *Atlantic Monthly* bore the imprint "Boston: Ticknor and Fields, 135 Washington Street [device] London: Trubner and Company, M DCCC LXII." The magazine thus circulated in England.

According to Christopher Morley, Conan Doyle "was always a campaigner for Anglo-American friendship. No one was ever more earnestly convinced that the collaboration of all the English-speaking peoples is of crucial importance to the world. To this hope he dedicated his novel *The White Company* in 1891."[8] With Conan Doyle's pro-American sentiments, and his appreciation for American literature,[9] I suggest that it is a reasonable inference, perhaps one which Holmes himself might have been comfortable in making, that Conan Doyle read Emerson's sketch in the *Atlantic*, and that the "circumstantial evidence" sentence caught his eye. *The Adventure of the Noble Bachelor* was first published in 1892, thirty years after Conan Doyle may have read Emerson's biographical essay.[10]

[1] Readers of the Sherlock Holmes sacred canon will look in vain for the phrase "Elementary, my dear Watson!". Although often attributed to Holmes, in fact, he never said it. Ellery Channing, was, of course, Thoreau's friend, companion on many of his excursions, and first biographer. See Walter Harding, *The Days of Henry Thoreau: A Biography* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1965) 169.

[2] A. Conan Doyle, *Adventures of Sherlock Holmes* (New York: Harper & Row, 1930).

[3] In the waning days of the 20th century, this reference may seem opaque. In Thoreau's time, milk was purchased from farmers, not supermarkets. Watering the milk to cheat the consumer was a regrettable but not unknown practice in 19th century New England. The appearance of trout in the milk was eloquent, if circumstantial, evidence that the milk had been watered.

[4] In *The Papers of The Bibliographical Society of America* 47 (1953): 133.

[5] I believe Ms. Stern meant "*Excursions*" which was published in 1863 by Ticknor and Fields. Emerson's biographical essay on Thoreau, which Emerson wrote (and delivered) as Thoreau's funeral eulogy, is the piece to which Ms. Stern refers. However, as I argue below, Conan Doyle may have seen the first printing of this biographical essay in the August 1862 number of the *Atlantic Monthly*.

[6] The " circumstantial evidence " sentence appears in Thoreau's Journal for November 11, 1850. The full sentence reads "Some circumstantial evidence is very strong, as when you find a trout in the milk." I am grateful to Bradley P. Dean, Director of the Media Center at the Thoreau Institute, for locating this sentence.

[7] *Atlantic Monthly* 10, no. 58 (August, 1862): 239.

[8] Christopher Morley, ed., *Sherlock Holmes and Dr. Watson, A Textbook of Friendship* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1944), 18. (Hereafter, "Morley"). Conan Doyle was by no means the only British writer to hold this view, especially in 1944; for example, it was one of Winston Churchill's themes.

[9] Speaking of *The Adventure of the Noble Bachelor*, Morley states, "This story is particularly famous for Holmes' pro-American sentiments" (353). And Morley points out that Conan Doyle was influenced by Poe (3). In *Conan Doyle* (London: John Murray, 1966), Pierre Norden says "Conan Doyle was one of the first British writers to be inspired and enriched by American literary traditions. Bret Harte and Poe were his models, and for Poe in particular he felt unqualified admiration" (79). Norden states that Conan Doyle first visited the United States in 1894 (79), two years after publication of *The Adventure of the Noble Bachelor*, so the reference to the "circumstantial evidence" quote must have come from Conan Doyle's reading Thoreau in England. Conan Doyle himself, discussing his creation of Sherlock Holmes, recalled, "Poe's masterful detective, M. Dupin, had from boyhood been one of my heroes" (Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, *Memories and Adventures* [Boston: Little, Brown, 1924], 69).

[10] Morley, 351.

Moved by a Book: A Question of Punctuation

Ian Box

One aspect of the elegant simplicity of *Walden* is its reduction of a meaningful education to "the three R's." If we learn to keep our accounts in order, to read well and express our thoughts clearly and deliberately, we might live as fully and deeply as Thoreau seems to have done—loving life and regretting nothing. Although "Economy" shows off Thoreau's accounting skills, the heart of the book like that of the writer is drawn to reading and writing. Thoreau's greatest skill was his ability to express life, both in the sense of living fully and writing about it. And since "a man must see before he can say,"[1] the bulk of the sayings in *Walden* are based on seeing or reading, if not Plato, then other classic works and especially Nature itself, "the language which all things and events speak without metaphor."[2]

Thoreau's concentration on reading as possibly the noblest of exercises—"How much virtue there is in simply seeing!"—and on writing—"the best you can write will be the best you are," make his more obscure references particularly intriguing and the awkward passages all the more jarring.[3] A minor error in punctuation, particularly surprising given the context of the passage, appears in the chapter on "Reading" in *Walden*. The sentence—"How many a man has dated a new era in his life from the reading of a book."—would seem to require a question mark rather than a period. In fact however, the second edition of Fowler's *Modern English Usage* suggests two alternative forms of punctuation. Depending on whether the force of the "how" which introduces the sentence is essentially exclamatory or interrogative, such a sentence could end either with an exclamation or a question mark.[4] Applied to the passage in question, this suggests that an exclamation mark should have been used if the point of the statement were that the lives of a surprisingly large number of people have been changed by the reading of a book. This is the sort of exclamatory observation which is represented in the Journal passage about the virtue of seeing, cited at the beginning of this paragraph. However, if the intended response to Thoreau's question were that few people are ever so affected by a book, the sentence should end with a question mark. In neither case would a period be used.

The most likely, if least interesting, reason for such a trivial textual ambiguity would be a brief lapse of attention on Thoreau's part, although it might be allowed that such an oversight is uncharacteristic of one so preoccupied with clarity of expression, particularly in a chapter devoted to the importance of careful reading. "Reading" extols the noble adventure of reading "true books in a true spirit" and bemoans the sad state of cultural life in Concord: "our reading, our conversation, thinking, are all on a very low level, worthy only of pygmies and manikins."[5] In fact, reading is sufficiently important to Thoreau that it is the only activity to which he devotes a separate chapter in *Walden*. With this in mind, I would like to offer an alternative explanation for the use of the period in this passage.

Read in context, the sentence "How many a man has dated a new era in his life from the reading of a book." should end with a question mark since the intended response is that hardly anyone in Concord reads sufficiently well to be moved by a book. On the other hand, *Walden*, as everyone knows, has itself become one of those classic works of the sort Thoreau recommended to wake up his dull readers. For many, it is a book "addressed to our condition exactly" and one that has "possibly put a new aspect on the face of things for us."[6] It might even be said that more than a few readers have dated a new era in their lives from the reading of it. Given the remarkable influence of Thoreau's text, the sentence in question could be read by contemporary readers as more exclamatory than interrogative. With this in mind, I would like to think that Thoreau, the careful writer hoping for attentive readers, deliberately ended his sentence with the ambiguity of the period, fully aware that in his time and place it required a question mark, but anticipating that so many future readers might be moved by his words as to belie the pessimism of the passage and allow posterity to substitute an exclamation mark for his period.

[1] *The Journal of Henry David Thoreau*, ed. B. Torrey and F. H. Allen (New York: Dover, 1962), Vol. III, November 1, 1851, 85.

[2] Henry D. Thoreau, *Walden*, ed. J. L. Shanley (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1971), 111.

[3] The quotations are journal entries from April 10 and February 28, 1841, respectively; see Vol. 1, 247, 225-26. One of the more intriguing passages in *Walden* is the famous bay horse reference, while my favorite among the simply awkward is the following from the essay on Civil Disobedience: "If a man is thought-free, fancy-free, imagination-free, that which is not never for a long time appearing to be to him, unwise rulers or reformers cannot fatally interrupt him"; see *Walden and Civil Disobedience*, ed. Michael Meyer (New York: Penguin, 1983), 410.

[4] Fowler points out that sentences beginning with *what* or *how* may be exclamatory or interrogative depending on the context. His example is virtually identical to the passage in Thoreau: "*How often does it happen* may be either a question (answer, *Once a month* etc.) requiring *happen*?, or an exclamation (meaning, *Its frequency is surprising*) requiring *happen!*"; see H.W. Fowler, *A Dictionary of Modern English Usage*, 2nd edition (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1968), 591.

[5] *Walden*, 107.

[6] Ibid.

Can you put mysteries into words? Do you presume to fable of the ineffable? Pray, what geographer are you, that speak of heaven's topography? Whose friend are you that speak of God's personality? . . . Tell me of the height of the mountains of the moon, or of the diameter of space, and I may believe you, but of the secret history of the Almighty, and I shall pronounce thee mad. Yet we have a sort of family history of our God, - so have the Tahitians of theirs, - and some old poet's grand imagination is imposed on us as adamantine everlasting truth, and God's own word!

A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers

Notes and Queries

Heather Kirk Thomas of Baltimore writes that the December 1998 edition of the *TWA Ambassador* magazine, pp. 26-31, features a nature photo shoot titled "One Day at a Time" by *National Geographic* photographer Jim Brandenburg from his book *Chased by the Light* (North Word Press). The running header to pages 27-31 reads as follows: "Like Thoreau, who had gone to the woods because he wished to . . . 'transact some private business with the fewest obstacles,' I embraced this endeavor, with some trepidation, to see if I could find what had drawn me so long ago to my art, and to see if I had become as perceptive of nature as I hoped."

Also from Heather: The Sunday, 10 January 1999 *Baltimore Sun*, p. 13G, features the following quotation from Thoreau as the "Opening Words" headline (or featured quote) above a listing of the top-ten best-sellers in fiction and nonfiction: "When I wrote the following pages, or rather the bulk of them, I lived alone, in the woods, a mile from any neighbour, in a house which I had built myself . . .".

This cartoon is tucked into an article on Thoreauvian disobedience (listed in this issue's Bibliography under Lemieux): a frowning person decked out in a halo and angel's wings, standing on a cloud, says to a companion, "Gee, I guess we *over*simplified our lives."

Joel Myerson reports that the Thoreau Institute has been featured in the December *Library Journal* (p. 50), in an issue covering the new and renovated libraries of the year. The Thoreau Institute reading room is featured in full color.

Congratulations to Tim Clemmer, a rare book dealer in Richboro, Pennsylvania, for two wonderful discoveries he recently made. Mr. Clemmer sent in a photocopy of what he believes to be a previously unrecorded early extract from *Walden* he discovered in a copy of a scarce nineteenth-century weekly periodical: "Wood Sounds," in *Dwight's Journal of Music, A Paper of Art and Literature* (listed in this issue's bibliography under Thoreau). The printed passage, taken from the "Sounds" chapter, runs from "Sometimes, on Sundays, I heard the bells . . ." through seven paragraphs, to the trump of the bullfrogs "vainly bellowing troonk from time to time, and pausing for a reply." Now, *Walden* was published 9 August 1854, and this "Wood Sounds" extract appears in an issue of *Dwight's Journal* dated 19 August 1854, ten days later. (The publisher, John Sullivan Dwight, was a Brook Farmer and associate of the Concord Transcendentalists, who favorably reviewed *Walden* in the 12 August 1854 edition of his Journal.) Is "Wood Sounds" then the earliest known excerpt from Walden to appear after publication of the book? And does anyone find this extract previously recorded in any bibliography?

Also, Mr. Clemmer just purchased at auction an 1866 edition of *Cape Cod* (also listed in this issue's bibliography), and finds that the Borst bibliography records an 1865 printing as the second edition and an 1871 printing as the third; he therefore believes that his 1866 copy may be the actual third edition, and the 1871 then would be the fourth edition. Does anyone have additional information bearing on this discovery?

Staefano Paolucci notes that John G. Mitchell mentions and quotes Thoreau in the November 1998 issue of *National Geographic*, in an article on wilderness areas in the U.S.

The Association for the Study of Literature and Environment (ASLE) will host its Third Biennial Conference at Western Michigan University in Kalamazoo, June 2-5, 1999. The theme of the conference is "What to Make of a Diminished Thing," and featured speakers include John Elder, Stephanie Mills, and Scott Russell Sanders. For information about panels and calls for papers, contact Walter Isle, ASLE 99; English Department MS 30;Rice University; 6100 South Main; Houston, TX 77005. E-mail: <wwisle@rice.edu>. Web site: <www.people.virginia.edu/~djp2n/asle.html>.

From the researches of Brad Dean and Austin Meredith, we find this Victorian-age aspersion upon Thoreau from the diary of President Rutherford B. Hayes (2 April 1885): ". . . heard Professor Finley, of Akron, read a fair paper on Thoreau. Thoreau was a man of gifts and culture. Simple, sincere, and brave. But he failed in his duties. He was not a good citizen, not a patriot; 'never married, never went to church, never voted, and never paid a tax,' [well, hyperbole is often thought to make effective rhetoric] said Professor Finley. To this I added, 'and it is a satisfaction that he did go to jail'! as he ought. This will do as a joke."

A semi-monthly e-mail newsletter called *The Simple Times*, dedicated to the pursuit of simple living, is advertised as a fun and helpful forum for discussion of such topics as frugality, simplified housekeeping, decluttering tips, inexpensive educational ideas for children, economical cooking and kitchen management, and craft projects; it also includes letters from readers, interviews, recommended resources, and book reviews. To subscribe, send a blank message to <subscribe-simple-times@xc.org>. The owner is Larry Wilson and the author/editor/publisher is Deborah Taylor-Hough.

Ron Pesha sent in a copy of "The Simple Life: Walden Too," a short piece in a March 5-11, 1998, Albany, NY, publication (weekend newspaper magazine?), *Metroland*. In it Tom Nattell discusses the growing difficulty of and need for simplifying our lives. Natell refers to the "voluntary simplicity" movement, the Center for a New American Dream (highlighted in the Notes & Queries section of our last issue), and, of course, Thoreau's exemplary life.

The works of American artist Charles Burchfield (1893-1967), who was influenced by the writings of Thoreau, are or have been on display at art museums in Columbus, Ohio, and New York City. The Queens Museum of Art in New York opens an exhibit of his work on January 27, and exhibits have been and may still be running at the Kennedy Galleries and the Metropolitan Museum in New York, and at the Columbus Museum of Art in Ohio. Austin Meredith likes Burchfield's watercolors, says they "look like early excellent Disney fantasias," but warns that the first

continued on next page

Notes & Queries, *from page 9*

art historians writing about Burchfield couldn't tell their Emersons from their Thoreaus, and have promulgated the slightly off-kilter idea that Burchfield was an Emerson-lover.

Here's a bit of Thoreau-inspired, self-conscious television humor: Jim Dawson of Trappe, Maryland, saw an episode of the cartoon show "South Park," in which the character Eric Cartman wins an environmental essay contest by submitting a copy of *Walden* with Thoreau's name crossed out and his written in. Nobody notices, and he wins the contest. At the award ceremony, Wendy Testaberger, a jealous contestant, exposes him. Nobody cares. Wendy says to another student, "They don't even know what *Walden* is." To the crowd she yells, "I'll bet if *Walden* was a sit-com, you'd all know what it was!"

Clarence Burley sent in a nice two-page article from the February/March 1998 issue of the magazine *Civilization*, "Going Wild: Elegies for the Great Outdoors," by Richard Todd. This is a review of three new books of American nature writing: *In the Company of Light* by John Hay (whom Todd identifies as the contemporary nature writer who works most firmly and well in the Thoreauvian tradition), *Wild Thoughts from Wild Places* by David Quammen, and *Wickerby: An Urban Pastoral* by Charles Siebert. The article features a postmodernist pastiche of Thoreau's face (from the Maxham dagerreotype) over a wilderness landscape that is threatened by earth-moving machines and apartment buildings. The review of the three books is framed by references to Thoreau, affirming the difficulty writers in this genre have of getting "outside of" him. The opening line reads, "American nature writers cannot entirely love Henry David Thoreau."

R. Viswamurthy writes about the state of the Thoreau Foundation of Bangalore, India, established in 1989. The Foundation there is a local voluntary-service organization (a "centre for environmental, intellectual, humanitarian & cultural awareness") dedicated to improving life in R. Tagore Nagar, a neighborhood of Bangalore, and it publishes a newsletter called *Nature*. Mr. Viswamurthy remembers warmly his visit to Concord four years ago and his correspondence with Walter Harding, and sends regards to all Thoreau Society members. The address of the Foundation's newsletter is Nature, 63, HMT Layout, R. Tagore Nagar, Bangalore - 560 032, India. Their local Bangalore phone number, in case you're ever in the neighborhood, is 333-1421.

Richard Winslow III has alerted us to several Thoreau-related items:

Last spring the Institute for the Humanities at the University of Michigan sponsored an exhibit of intaglio prints by UM art professor Janie Paul, a native of Concord, who used this technique to illustrate quotations from Thoreau's *A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers*. Intaglio consists of a layered combination of photography, drawing and painting. Paul intended for her prints and Thoreau's words together to express "the haunting and sometimes unnerving mysteries of nature." She says her printmaking technique is "perfect for the layered meanings of Thoreau's writing." A review of her exhibit appeared on 25 March 1998 in an unnamed Michigan newspaper. Before the exhibit was presented, information about Paul's project and artistic medium appeared in Notes & Queries in the Spring 1998 *Bulletin*. We trust her phone number and address listed then are still current.

A "Gardener's week" column in the 1 October 1998 *Boston Globe* (page F7) prefaces advice on dealing with first frosts with several lines of verse from Thoreau, beginning "The moon now rises to her absolute rule, / And the husbandman and the hunter / Acknowledge her for their mistress."

The May 23-29, 1998 *TV Guide* referred to Thoreau in a "Special Commentary" column by Tom Goldstein on the state of journalistic ethics in broadcasting. Goldstein, Dean of the Columbia University Graduate School of Journalism, ended his column by stating, "The lure of technology must be placed in perspective, . . . [and] not every technological advance translates into significance," and then quoting the lines from *Walden* about whether Maine and Texas have anything important to communicate via the new telegraph.

A 15-minute videotape program about the production of the new Ascensius Press edition of *The Maine Woods*, which was featured in the Additions to the Bibliography in the last (Fall 1998) issue of the *Bulletin*, is available for $25 from The Ascensius Press, 625 Forest Avenue, Portland, Maine 04101. Phone 207-780-1288, fax 780-1287.

Last year's Earth Day was celebrated in Rockport, Massachusetts with a Theatre in the Pines production of the play, *The Night Thoreau Spent in Jail*. In a 23 April 1998 article about the production in the *Gloucester Daily Times*, Thoreau is identified as "Poet, naturalist and Harvard 'drop-out.'"

"The little things add up" is the title of a piece in the *Boston Sunday Globe* of 5 July 1998 about the 24-hour species-identification project for Biodiversity Day, conducted in Concord and Lincoln. This remarkable census marathon was organized and attended by, among others, Peter Alden and Edward O. Wilson, who you will surely remember if you attended their fascinating talks in recent years at the Annual Gathering.

A special edition of the *Utne Reader* (May-June 1998) features a cover story, "Jammin' with the Giants: How to keep your mind alive for life," or "A Loose Canon: 150 Mind-Altering Masterpieces," which identifies and recommends 150 great books, films, theater/music/television pieces. On this list *Walden* is paired with *Mary Oliver: New and Selected Poems* (see John Chamberlain's essay on a Mary Oliver poem in our last issue of the *Bulletin*). The brief review of *Walden* reads as follows: "Thoreau is as much a satirist as a nature rhapsodist in this famous memoir as he mixes serene reflection with political and social zingers.

There is an incessant influx of novelty into the world, and yet we tolerate incredible dullness.

Walden

Additions to the Thoreau Bibliography

Michael Berger

Abbott, Collamer M. "Thoreau's *Walden*." *The Explicator* 56, no. 2 (Winter 1998): 74-76. Another attempt to interpret the "hound, . . . bay horse and . . . turtle dove" passage in *Walden*.

Baker, Carlos. *Emerson Among the Eccentrics: A Group Portrait*. Review: *The Sewanee Review* 105, no. 2 (April-June 1997): 281-98. Reviewed by Sam Pickering. A review by a student of Baker's that is also part personal memoir and part reflection on the state of literary studies, with remarks on Thoreau.

Boisson, Steve. "Concord, by the Book." *Historic Traveler* (May 1998): 20+. A very fine ten-page guide to literary Concord, covering her major authors and including excellent photos and other illustrations, maps, and a trip planner.

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Carpenter, Geoffrey Paul. "Deforestation in Nineteenth-Century Maine: The Record of Henry David Thoreau." *Maine History* (Summer 1998): 2-35.

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Lea, Sydney. "'I Recognize Thy Glory': On the American Nature Essay." *The Sewanee Review* 106, no. 3 (July-September 1998): 478-85.

Lemieux, Pierre. "Uncivil Disobedience." *Liberty* 8, no. 6 (July 1995): 43-45. "Would Henry David Thoreau have obeyed stop signs in Outremont, Quebec?"

Ravell, David. "Thoreau's Attentiveness to Sounds." *Conjunctions* 29: 395-400[?]. Focuses on excerpt from Harding's *Days* about Henry's actions at the funeral of his elder sister, Helen.

Snodgrass, Mary Ellen, ed. *Encyclopedia of Utopian Literature*. Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO, 1995. Includes entries on Thoreau, *Walden*, and transcendentalism.

Thoreau, Henry D. *Cape Cod*. Boston: Ticknor and Fields, 1866.

——. *Journal, Volume 5: 1852-1853*. Review: *Nineteenth-Century Literature* 52; no. 4 (March 1998): 559. Briefly Noted.

——. *La voce nuova di Henry D. Thoreau*. Edited and with an afterword by Alessandro Cogolo. N.p.: Frassinelli, 1998. A new Italian edition of *Walden*, based on Harding's 1995 annotated edition, and "Civil Disobedience," based on Michael Meyer's 1986 Penguin Classics edition. Thought to be the first translation of *Walden* into Italian since 1958.

——. *Walden*. Review: *Sierra* 83, no. 3 (May-June, 1998): 82. Brief notice of the Beacon Press edition and its introduction by Bill McKibben.

——. "Wood Sounds." *Dwight's Journal of Music, A paper of Art and Literature* 5, no. 20 (19 August 1854): 155-56. An extract from the "Sounds" chapter of *Walden*, thought by Mr. Tim Clemmer to be previously unrecorded in any bibliography.

Tripp, Raymond, P., Jr. *Two Fish on One Hook: A Transformative Reading of Thoreau's* Walden. Hudson, NY: Lindisfarne Books, 1998.

Vidyadhar, T. "Thoreau Inspires Many, Not Just Mahatma Gandhi." *Nature* (Thoreau Foundation, Bangalore, India) 49 (October-November 1997): 2. Refers to the story of a subaltern in the 14th Madras Native Infantry, a Mangalorean named George Larpent Smith, who some sixty or more years ago lived a retired life in the forest of Honaver for several years, inspired by Thoreau.

Wagoner, David. "Thoreau and the Stumps." *Yale Review* 86, no. 4 (October 1998): 62-63. A poem about Thoreau, the third by David Wagoner recently brought to our attention.

We are indebted to the following for information sent in for this bulletin: R. Black, T. W. Clemmer, L. Dennis, V. Friesen, M. Harding, P. Huber, S. Paolucci, M. Sperber, R. Winslow III. Please keep Michael Berger (7823 Shadowhill Way, Cincinnati, OH 45242; e-mail <bergermb@email.uc.edu>; fax 513-791-5180) informed of items he has missed and new items as they appear. If possible, please also include or send a copy of the book, article, or other item, so that it can be preserved in the Thoreau Society's collection at the Thoreau Institute.

Calendar

February

Massachusetts

24 Wednesday 7:30 p.m.

"Nature in Words." Christopher Leahy, Director of the Massachusetts Audubon's Center for Biological Conservation and author of several nature guides and *The Nature of Massachusetts*, will speak on the challenges of capturing experiences of nature in words without falling prey to sentimentality, solemnity, or one-note arias of awe.

This is the second in the 1999 lecture series, "Writing for Nature," sponsored by the Thoreau Society, Thoreau Institute, and Concord Museum. Lectures held at Concord Museum (200 Lexington Road). Free and open to the public. For more information call (978) 369-9763.

March

Massachusetts

30 Tuesday 7:30 p.m.

"The New Thoreaus: The Community of Modern Day Nature Writers." Bill McKibben, well known author of the acclaimed book, *The End of Nature*, will describe the work of many of his friends and colleagues amongst the great 20th-century nature writers-Terry Tempest Williams, Rick Bass, Gary Snyder, Barry Lopez and others—and will argue that they represent not only an unprecedented flowering of great writing but also a model for the emergence of new communities.

This is the third lecture in the 1999 series, "Writing for Nature," sponsored by the Thoreau Society, Thoreau Institute, and Concord Museum. Lectures held at Concord Museum (200 Lexington Road). Free and open to the public. For more information call (978) 369-9763.

Minnesota

18 Thursday 7:00 p.m.

"Representing Nature in Words and Pictures" a two-part lecture with Bradley P. Dean on "Thoreau's Gospel according to the Present Moment" and Abbie Rorer on "Drawing From Nature." Southwest State University (Marshall, MN). For more information call (507) 537-6295. Free and open to the public.

April

Massachusetts

20 Tuesday 7:30 p.m.

"A Life in Nature: Searching for Rachel Carson." Linda Lear, Research Professor of Environmental History at George Washington Univeristy and Research Collaborator at the Smithsonian Institution, and author of the acclaimed biography, *Rachel Carson: Witness for Nature*, will look at how Carson made the most of her handicaps of gender and independence, and how her life was preparation for the writing of *Silent Spring*.

This is the fourth lecture in the 1999 series, "Writing for Nature," sponsored by the Thoreau Society, Thoreau Institute, and Concord Museum. Lectures held at Concord Museum (200 Lexington Road). Free and open to the public. For more information call (978) 369-9763.

May

Maryland

15 Saturday 1:00 p.m.

Joe Gilbert will discuss *Walden*, "Walking," and Thoreau's sense of place. He will conclude with a walking tour of the arboretum grounds. Adkins Arboretum (Denton, Maryland). Free and open to the public.

Massachusetts

18 Tuesday 7:30 p.m.

"Edwin Way Teale: A Snapshot." Tom Potter is past president of the Indiana Audubon Society, chairman of a recent conference on Thoreau, and writer of the forthcoming authorized biography of Edwin Way Teale. He will offer a brief look at several aspects of the life of Edwin Way Teale, Pulitzer Prize-winning writer and naturalist, and accomplished photographer. Teale was influenced by Henry Thoreau, but unlike Thoreau, avoided social criticism, expressing only in private notes his caustic thinking on social issues.

This is the fifth and final lecture in the 1999 series, "Writing for Nature," sponsored by the Thoreau Society, Thoreau Institute, and Concord Museum. Lectures held at Concord Museum (200 Lexington Road). Free and open to the public. For more information call (978) 369-9763.

This Bulletin was supported by a generous donation made by Yoich Nyui in honor of Jinzaburo Nyui, who passed away in September 1998. Jinzaburo Nyui was a professor at Tohoku University from 1952 to 1967 and was a pioneer in Thoreau studies in Japan. Nyui made many trips to Concord, Massachusetts, and always appreciated the kindness he received. He was Professor Emeritus at Tohoku University until his death at the age of 95. Nyui is now buried in Sapporo, Japan, the landscape that he loved during his lifetime.

The Thoreau Society Bulletin is published quarterly by the Thoreau Society.

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To fulfill its mission, the Society:

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- sponsors various Thoreau-related excursions and events throughout the year;
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- holds a four-day annual gathering each July in Concord, Massachusetts; and
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Membership in the Society includes subscriptions to its two publications, *The Concord Saunterer* (published each autumn) and the *Thoreau Society Bulletin* (published quarterly). Society members receive a 10% discount on all merchandise purchased from the Thoreau Society Shop at Walden Pond and advance notice about Society programs, including the annual gathering. Contact the Thoreau Society administrative offices in Lincoln, Massachusetts, for membership information (address below).

Thoreau Society Directory

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Inquiries about merchandise (including books and mail-order items) should be directed to Jon Fadiman, Shop Manager, Thoreau Society Shop at Walden Pond, 915 Walden Street, Concord, MA 01742-4511, U.S.A.; tel: (781) 259-4770; fax: (978) 287-5620; e-mail: Shop@walden.org.

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